

IT SEEMED LIKE THE LATE AUTUMN WIND BLEW THEM IN THAT NIGHT, SPINNING AND DIZZYING FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD.

WELCOME
CEREAL
CONVENTION



IT WAS A BITCH WIND, KNIFE-SHARP AND CUTTING, AND IT BLEW BAD AND COLD.



AND THEY CAME WITH IT, SCURRYING AND SKITTERING, LIKE YELLOW LEAVES AND OLD NEWSPAPERS, FROM A THOUSAND PLACES AND FROM NOWHERE AT ALL.



THEY CAME IN THEIR SUITS AND THEIR TEE SHIRTS, CARRYING RUCKSACKS AND BRIEFCASES AND SUITCASES AND PLASTIC BAGS, MUTTERING AND HUMMING AND SILENT AS THE NIGHT.



IT SEEMED LIKE THE BITTER FALL WIND BROUGHT THEM THERE.



ON ARRIVAL THEY EYE EACH OTHER WARILY, STRIKE UP CAUTIOUS CONVERSATIONS.

SOME ARE ALREADY ACQUAINTED, AND THEY FORM INSTANT KNOTS AND WHORLS IN THE BAR AND THE LOBBY, WAITING TO CHECK IN, OR FOR THE RESTAURANT TO OPEN.

MAN, I BEEN TRAVELLING FOR FIVE DAYS NOW. THE JOURNEY WAS A REAL KILLER. BELIEVE ME.

HATE THESE LITTLE HICK TOWNS. WOULDN'T BE SEEN DEAD HERE, IF IT WASN'T FOR THE CONVENTION.



...THAT'S JUST WHAT THEY'LL DO. ONE OF THESE DAYS THESE BOOTS ARE GONNA WALK ALL OVER YOU.



TELL YOU, I COULD MURDER A STEAK. A GOOD, BLOODY STEAK.



SO THAT WAS WHEN HARRY KILLED THE LIGHTS. I COULD'A DIED.



THEY DO THIS CHOCOLATE FUDGE WHIP THAT IS JUST TO DIE FOR.





HAS ANYONE SEEN THE FAMILY MAN?

TEX



THE DEVIL? UH, WOULD THAT BE THE KENTUCKY DEVIL, OR THE OREGON DEVIL? I GOT BOTH HERE.

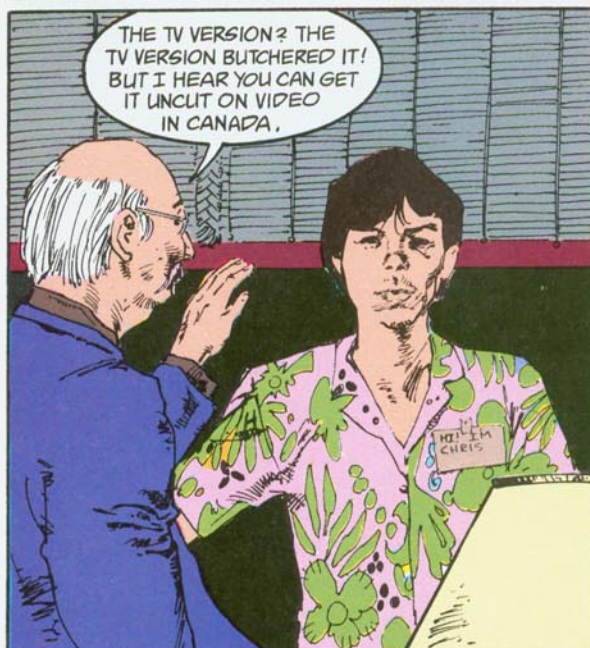


YEAH. HE SLAYS ME. YOU HEARD HIM DO THE "I AM JOHN'S COATHANGER" ROUTINE?

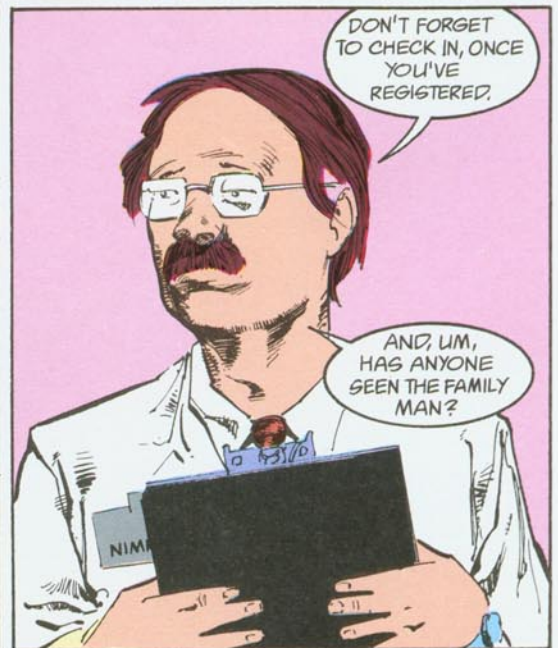
EXCUSE ME? CAN YOU ALL GET YOUR BADGES AND REGISTRATION PACKS FROM THE REGISTRATION TABLE IN THE SCARLETT O'HARA ROOM?

HELL, I THOUGHT THE WHOLE ISSUE WAS DEAD AND BURIED IN THE SIXTIES.

KNOTS BECOME GROUPS AND CLUSTERS, ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS.



THE TV VERSION? THE TV VERSION BUTCHERED IT! BUT I HEAR YOU CAN GET IT UNCLUT ON VIDEO IN CANADA.



DON'T FORGET TO CHECK IN, ONCE YOU'VE REGISTERED.

AND, UH, HAS ANYONE SEEN THE FAMILY MAN?



I NEED TO SPEAK TO THE MANAGER.

THAT'S ME, BUB.

WE'VE TALKED ON THE PHONE. I AM MR. NIMROD, THE CONVENTION ORGANIZER. I JUST WANTED TO CHECK THAT EVERYTHING WAS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.



OKAY, WELL. THE CONVENTION HALL IS SET UP. I'LL NEED TO CHECK WITH YOU ABOUT THE BANQUET, THE KITCHEN WILL NEED EXACT NUMBERS.



ONE PROBLEM.

WE AGREED THAT YOU WOULD HAVE THE ENTIRE HOTEL FOR YOUR CONVENTION.

"WAALL, I'M AFRAID WE STILL HAVE TWO GUESTS HERE.

"THEY WERE MEANT TO LEAVE THIS MORNING. SHE WAS ON HER WAY TO VISIT HER BROTHER. TELEPHONED AHEAD THIS MORNING, AND THE POLICE ANSWERED. THE PO-LICE."

SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO HER PEOPLE, AND THE POLICE REQUESTED THAT SHE STAYED WHERE SHE WAS, IN CASE THEY NEED HER.

THE SHERIFF SPOKE TO ME, AND I EXPLAINED ABOUT THE CONVENTION, BUT HE SAID THEY STAY ON HERE. I DON'T WANT TROUBLE WITH THE LAW, BUB.

I SEE. HMM. PLEASE ENSURE THAT THEY STAY OUT OF CONVENTION AREAS, THEN.

I DID ALREADY. THEY'VE SAID THEY'LL KEEP THEMSELVES TO THEIR ROOMS.



IN A PERFECT WORLD, ROSE WALKER WOULD BE SITTING IN THE CAR WITH HER BROTHER, JED, NEXT TO HER. GILBERT WOULD BE IN THE BACK.

THEY'D BE DRIVING BACK TO THE ROOMS ROSE RENTED, THEN SHE AND JED WOULD FLY BACK TO BOSTON.



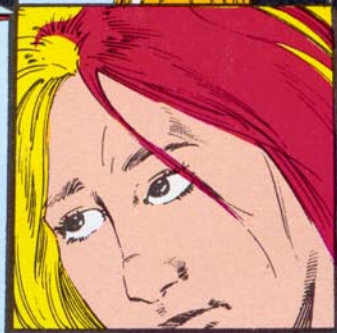
PERFECT WORLD.



JED. ROSE. MOM. TOGETHER ...

SHE HASN'T SEEN JED FOR SEVEN YEARS. SHE WAS FOURTEEN. HE WAS FIVE.

PERFECT.



SHE HAD WONDERED IF THEY'D RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER. SHE WAS SO PROUD OF HERSELF FOR TRACKING HIM DOWN.

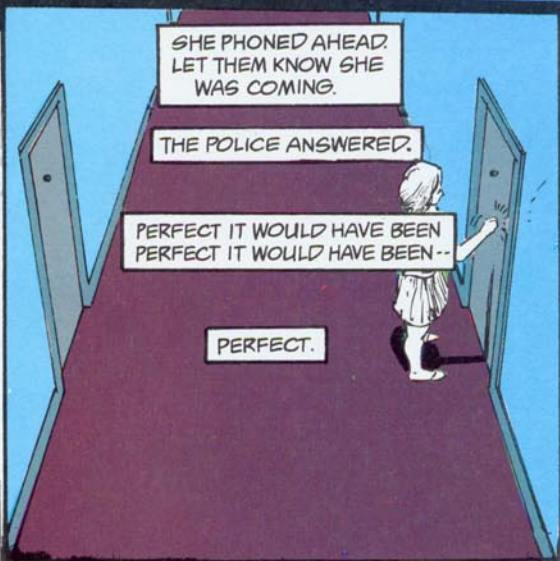
ONE PHONE CALL. THAT'S ALL IT TOOK AND IT ALL CAME TUMBLING DOWN.

SHE PHONED AHEAD LET THEM KNOW SHE WAS COMING.

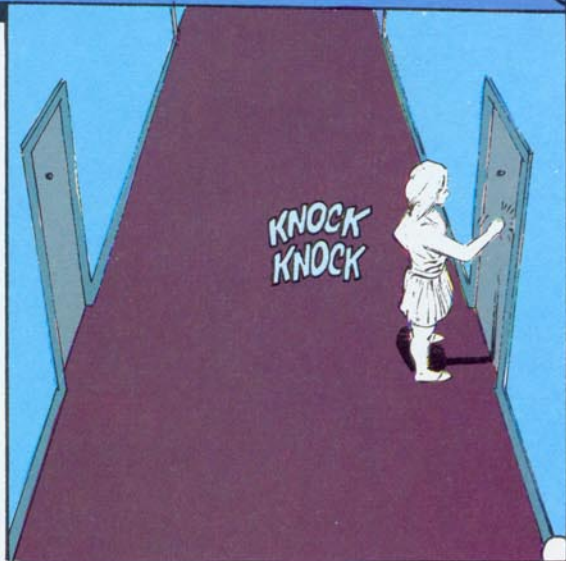
THE POLICE ANSWERED.

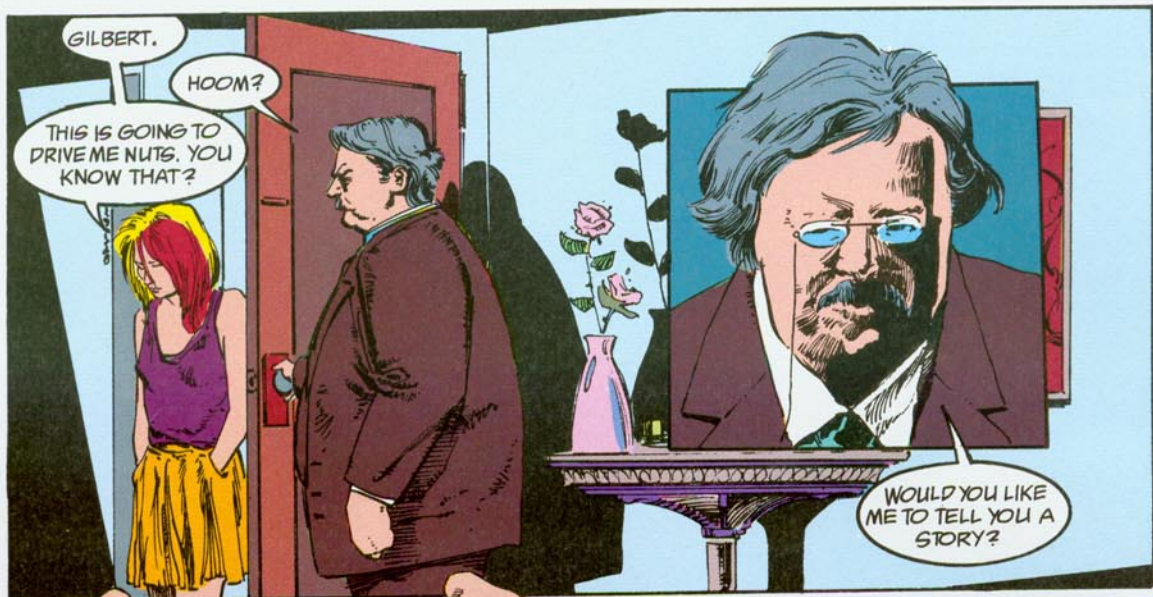
PERFECT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERFECT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN--

PERFECT.



**KNOCK
KNOCK**





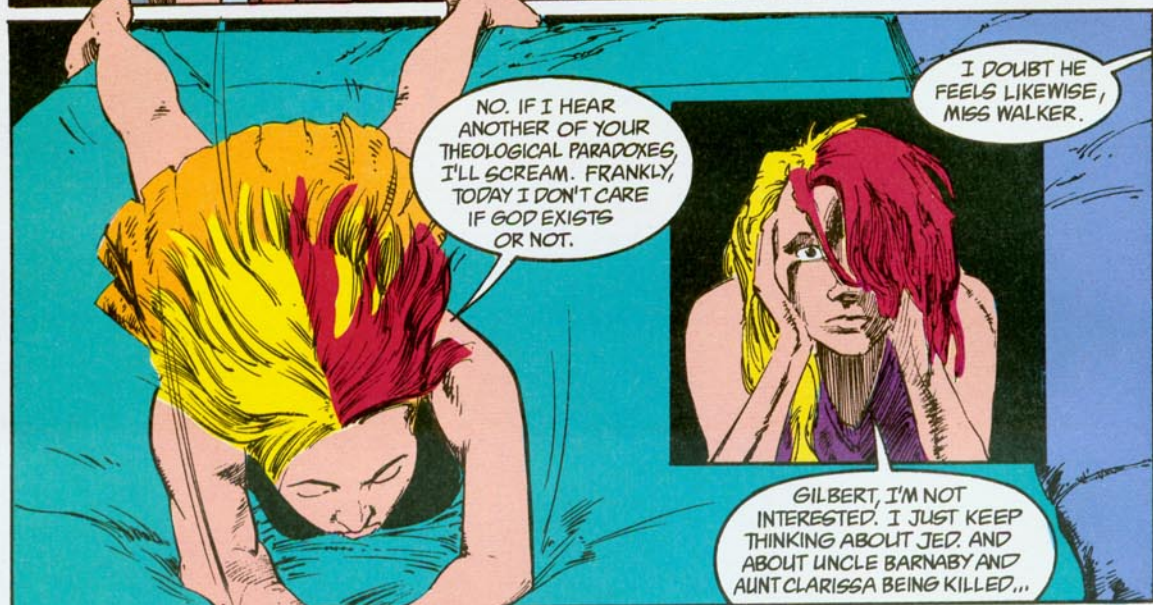
GILBERT.

HOOH?

THIS IS GOING TO DRIVE ME NUTS. YOU KNOW THAT?



WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TELL YOU A STORY?



NO. IF I HEAR ANOTHER OF YOUR THEOLOGICAL PARADOXES, I'LL SCREAM. FRANKLY, TODAY I DON'T CARE IF GOD EXISTS OR NOT.

I DOUBT HE FEELS LIKEWISE, MISS WALKER.

GILBERT, I'M NOT INTERESTED. I JUST KEEP THINKING ABOUT JED. AND ABOUT UNCLE BARNABY AND AUNT CLARISSA BEING KILLED...



THE MAN SAID, HE SAID, THE SHERIFF SAID, THAT THEY'D BEEN KEEPING JED IN THE BASEMENT. LIKE A... LIKE AN ANIMAL.

HOW CAN PEOPLE DO THAT TO PEOPLE?

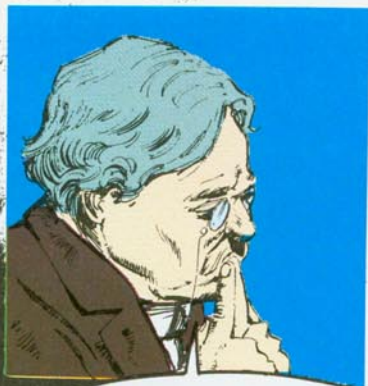
HOW CAN PEOPLE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE LIKE THAT?



IF YOU WANT TO TELL ME A STORY, TELL ME AN OLD ONE. A FAIRY STORY.

HOOH. DO YOU KNOW THE STORY OF LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD?

SURE.



THE RED HOOD WAS AN INVENTION OF CHARLES PERRAULT, WHO TIDIED UP THE FOLK TALES OF FRANCE FOR POPULAR CONSUMPTION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. OTHER CHANGES -- SUCH AS THE HAPPY ENDING, ARE LATER ADDITIONS.

I WILL TELL YOU AN ORIGINAL VERSION.



A LITTLE GIRL WAS TOLD TO BRING BREAD AND MILK TO HER GRANDMOTHER. AS SHE WAS WALKING THROUGH THE WOOD, A WOLF CAME UP TO HER AND ASKED HER WHERE SHE WAS GOING. "TO GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE."



THE WOLF RAN OFF AND ARRIVED FIRST AT THE HOUSE. HE KILLED THE GRANDMOTHER, Poured HER BLOOD INTO A BOTTLE AND SLICED HER FLESH ONTO A PLATE. THEN HE GOT INTO HER NIGHTCLOTHES AND WAITED IN THE BED.



KNOCK KNOCK.
"COME IN, MY DEAR."
"I'VE BROUGHT YOU SOME BREAD AND MILK, GRANDMOTHER."
"HAVE SOMETHING YOURSELF, MY DARLING. THERE IS MEAT AND WINE IN THE PANTRY."
THE LITTLE GIRL ATE WHAT WAS OFFERED.



AND AS SHE DID, A LITTLE CAT SAID, "SLUT! TO EAT THE FLESH AND DRINK THE BLOOD OF YOUR GRANDMOTHER!"
THEN THE WOLF SAID, "UNDRESS, AND GET INTO BED WITH ME."
"WHERE SHALL I PUT MY SKIRT?"
"THROW IT ON THE FIRE; YOU WON'T NEED IT ANY MORE."

FOR EACH GARMENT, PETTICOAT,
BODICE, AND STOCKINGS, THE
GIRL ASKED THE SAME QUESTION,
AND THE WOLF REPLIED, "THROW
IT ON THE FIRE; YOU WON'T
NEED IT ANY MORE."



WHEN THE GIRL GOT INTO BED
SHE SAID, "GRANDMOTHER --
HOW HAIRY YOU ARE."

"IT KEEPS ME WARMER, MY
DEAR."

"OH GRANDMOTHER, WHAT
LONG NAILS YOU HAVE."

"THEY ARE FOR SCRATCHING
MYSELF, MY DEAR."

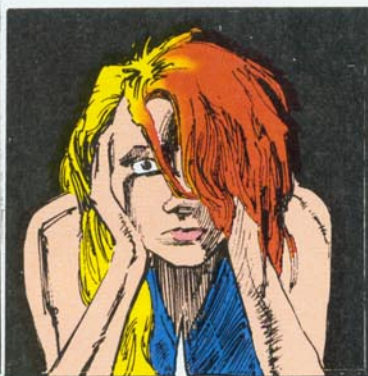


"OH GRANDMOTHER, WHAT
BIG TEETH YOU HAVE."



"THEY ARE FOR EATING YOU, MY DEAR."

AND HE ATE HER.



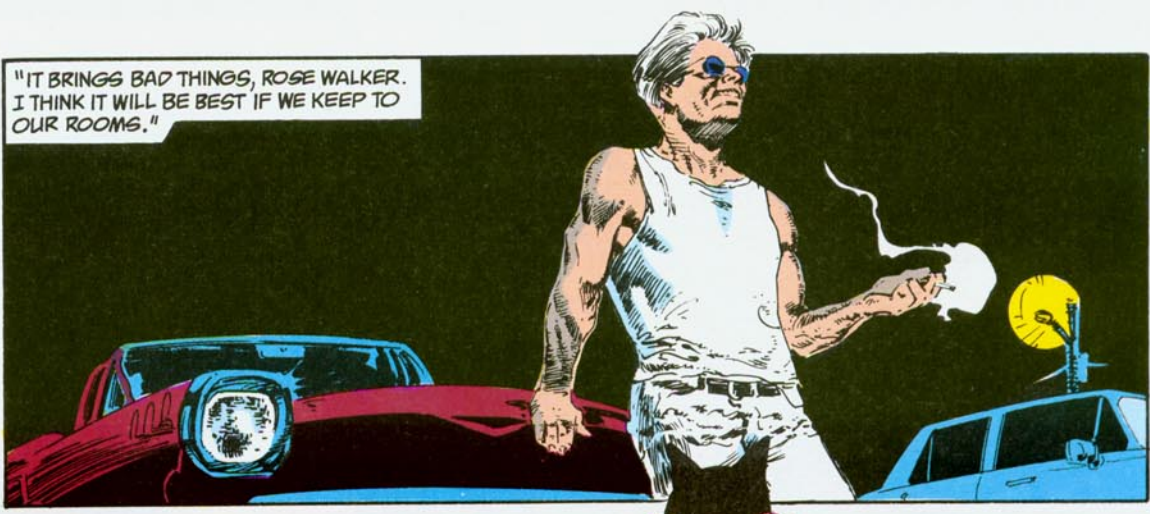
GILBERT--THAT'S
HORRIBLE.

I'M AFRAID SO.
THERE ARE EARLIER
VERSIONS THAT
ARE EVEN WORSE.

LISTEN
TO THE
WIND.



"IT BRINGS BAD THINGS, ROSE WALKER. I THINK IT WILL BE BEST IF WE KEEP TO OUR ROOMS."



HOW ARE WE DOING, FUN?



FUN LAND. NOT FUN FUN LAND.



SORRY, FUN LAND, RIGHT.

THAT'S OKAY, MISTER NIMROD. ~~MUURP~~ BEG PARDON.

EIGHTY PEOPLE HAVE REGISTERED SO FAR. PRETTY GOOD TURNOUT, HUH?

YEAH. NO SIGN OF THE FAMILY MAN?



HASN'T CHECKED IN HERE, YET. MAYBE HE'S NOT COMING.



HE CAN'T NOT COME. HE'S OUR GUEST OF HONOR. HE HAS TO COME. I GOT A LETTER FROM OUR BRITISH AGENT SAYING HE'D COME. I EVEN SENT THE AIR TICKETS.

WELL, HE'S NOT HERE.

HECK. HAVE WE GOT ANY OTHER BIG NAMES SO FAR?

UM. MOON RIVER, BUT HE SEEMED KIND OF SHY. AND THE CANDYMAN, YOU KNOW, THE ONE FROM CONNECTICUT. THE GUY WITH THE CANDY-CANES --

--YOU KNOW, THE LIP COLLECTOR. HE'S HERE.



WE HAVE TO HAVE A GUEST OF HONOR.

EXCUSE ME. IS THIS WHERE I REGISTER?



SURE IS, FRIEND.

WHAT NAME WOULD YOU BE LISTED UNDER?

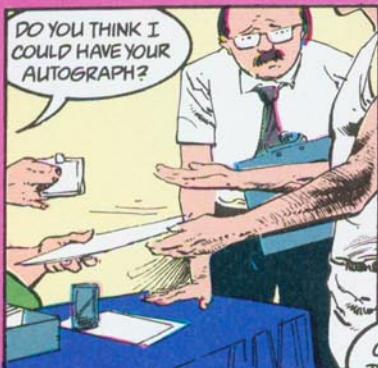


OH. WOW. MISTER NIMROD SAID YOU'D BE COMING, BUT... WOW. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE OLDER.

HERE'S YOUR STUFF, MISTER CORINTHIAN. UHN, WEAR YOUR BADGE AT ALL TIMES. YOU WON'T BE PERMITTED INTO THE CONVENTION AREAS WITHOUT IT. I'M, UH, WE'RE ALL BIG FANS OF YOURS.



DO YOU THINK I COULD HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?



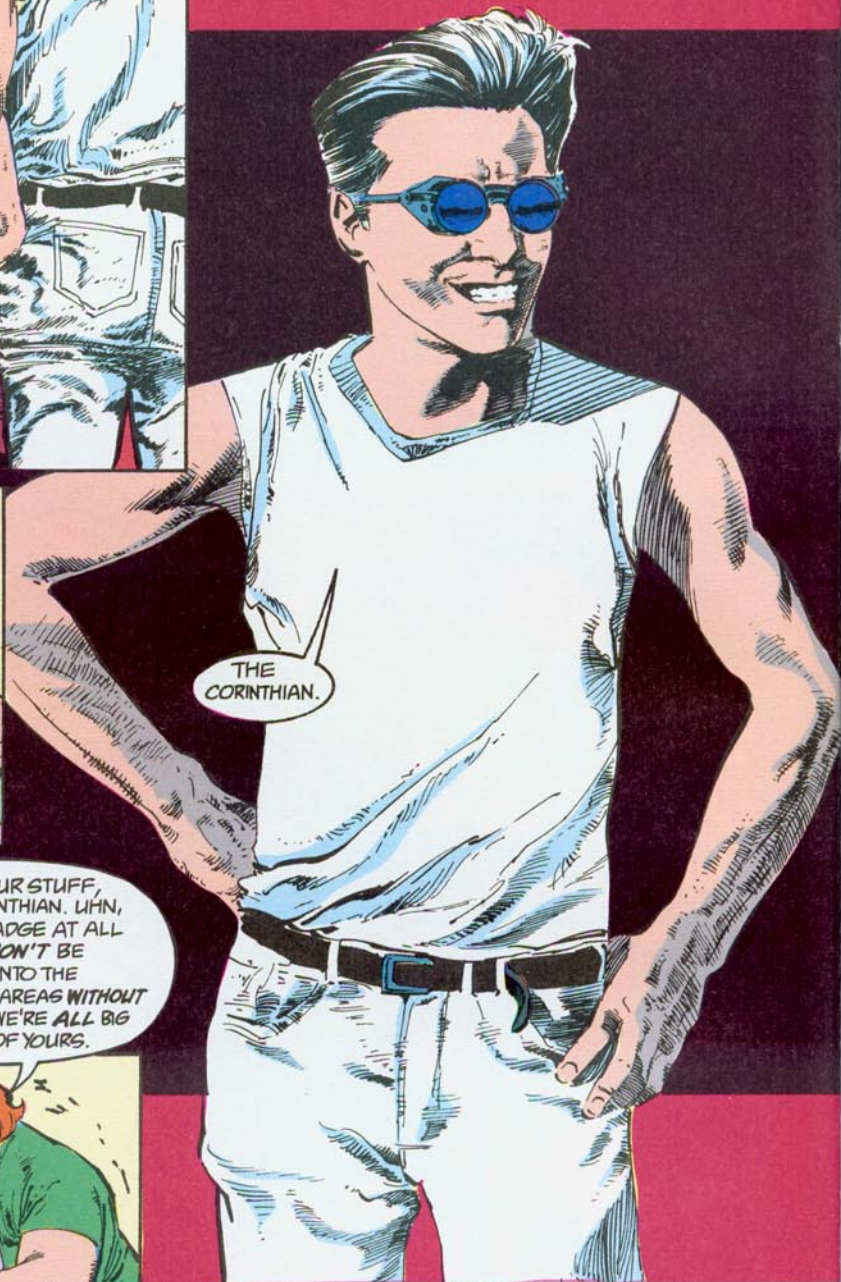
EXCUSE ME?

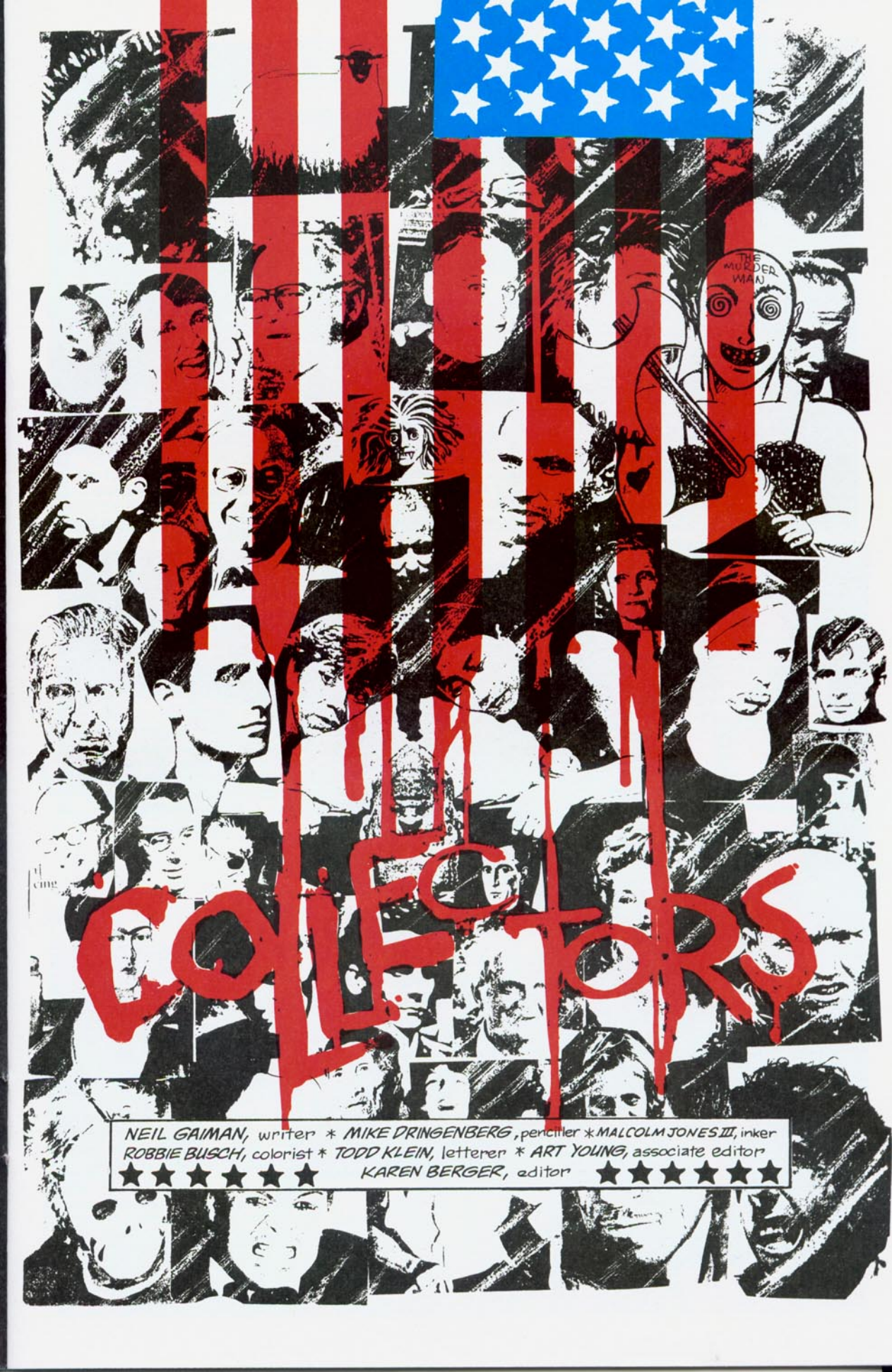
YES?

I'M NIMROD. THE ORGANIZER. WE TALKED ON THE PHONE A FEW DAYS BACK. I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK.

YOU SEE, YOU'RE SOMETHING OF A LEGEND. AMONG THE COLLECTORS.

THE CORINTHIAN.





NEIL GAIMAN, writer * MIKE DRINGENBERG, penciller * MALCOLM JONES III, inker
ROBBIE BUSCH, colorist * TODD KLEIN, letterer * ART YOUNG, associate editor
★★★★★★★★ KAREN BERGER, editor ★★★★★★★★

HE DIDN'T THINK THERE WOULD BE SO MANY OF THEM.

NIMROD, A MIGHTY HUNTER BEFORE THE LORD, WHO HAS CERTAINLY BY NOW SHOWN EVERYBODY THAT HE'S NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING, CERTAINLY NOT BLOOD, DEFINITELY NOT WOMEN, IS...

HE'S SCARED?

STAGE FRIGHT.

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, HE TELLS HIMSELF. DON'T GO TO PIECES NOW.

YOU'RE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE. YOU'RE A SUCCESSFUL ORTHODONTIST.

YOU HAVE A SHACK OUT IN VERMONT THAT NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT, WITH FOUR FULL CHEST FREEZERS (AND ISN'T IT TIME TO BUY A FIFTH?) AND...

HELLO.

THE JOKE. TELL THEM THE JOKE.

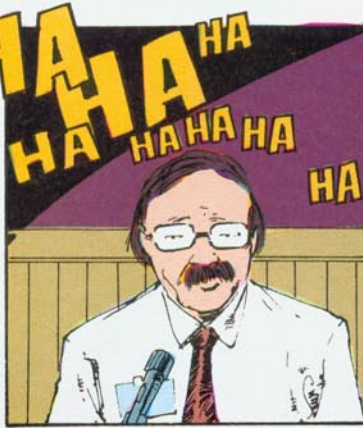
I, UH, HEARD A STORY RECENTLY I THOUGHT MIGHT AMUSE YOU. IT SEEMS THAT THE TELEPHONE RANG IN A POLICE STATION. THE DUTY COP ANSWERS AND A WOMAN'S VOICE SAYS, "HELP-- I'VE BEEN REAPED!"

HE SAYS, "DON'T YOU MEAN RAPED?"

"NO," SHE SAYS.

"HE USED A SCYTHE."

LAUGH YOU BASTARDS LAUGH AT MY JOKE LAUGH OR I'LL ...



IT'S REALLY GOOD TO SEE SO MANY OF US HERE. SO MANY. THIS IS THE FIRST OF THESE CONGS, AND IF YOU WANT TO SEE ANOTHER, A FEW RULES WE MUST ADHERE TO.



FIRSTLY, USE YOUR PREFERRED SOBRIQUET. NO CIVILIAN NAMES. SECONDLY, WE DON'T SHIT WHERE WE EAT.

YOU ALL KNOW THAT, PARTICULARLY NOW, AND HERE, WHEN SO MANY OF US WOULD BE AT RISK.



NOBODY DOES ANY COLLECTING UNTIL THE CONVENTION'S OVER AND YOU'RE AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED MILES AWAY.

AW...



THIRDLY, ON A MORE UNFORTUNATE NOTE, THE FAMILY MAN HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAKE IT. HE'S AN OLD MAN...

BUT EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING.



I'D LIKE TO PRESENT OUR NEW GUEST OF HONOR-- A LEGEND IN HIS OWN LIFETIME, AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL, I KNOW TO ME PERSONALLY...

ONE OF THE FIRST, AND ONE OF THE BEST.

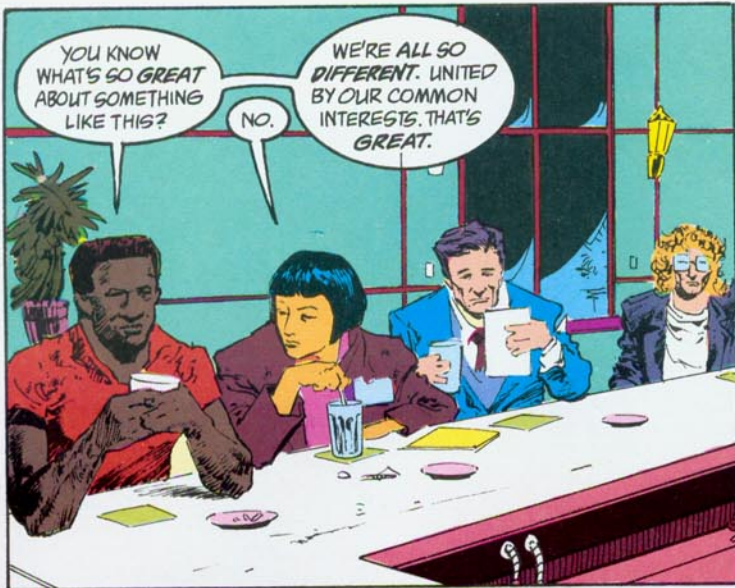
THEY'VE CALLED HIM THE EYE GUY, AND THE DARK ANGEL, AND THE SHADES AND MAYBE A THOUSAND OTHER NAMES...

BUT WE'VE ALWAYS KNOWN IT WAS ONE MAN.

GENTLEMEN. LADIES. OUR GUEST OF HONOR.

THE CORINTHIAN.

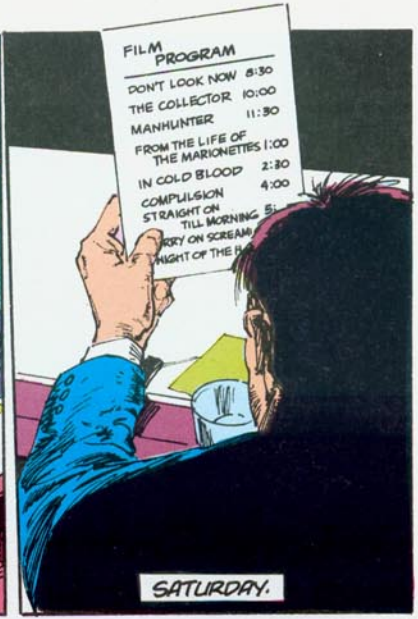




YOU KNOW WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

NO.

WE'RE ALL SO DIFFERENT. LIMITED BY OUR COMMON INTERESTS. THAT'S GREAT.



FILM PROGRAM

- DON'T LOOK NOW 8:30
- THE COLLECTOR 10:00
- MANHUNTER 11:30
- FROM THE LIFE OF THE MARIONETTES 1:00
- IN COLD BLOOD 2:30
- COMPULSION 4:00
- STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING 5:00
- CRY ON SCREAM NIGHT OF THE...

SATURDAY.



WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?

THE FILM PROGRAM. THEY'RE SHOWING *THE COLLECTOR*. A REMARKABLE NOVEL. WHEN I FIRST READ THAT BOOK, I THOUGHT--

--FOR THE FIRST TIME, I AM UNDERSTOOD.



EXCUSE ME, BUT I'VE SEEN YOU BEFORE, HAVEN'T I? YOU'RE THAT DOCTOR. WOW--TO THINK THAT YOU'RE A--THAT YOU'RE A COLLECTOR. WOW.



Khoffe. MM. THANK YOU. YOU ARE?

I'M THE BOSEYMAN.

I'VE HEARD OF YOU. THE NEWSPAPERS, IN THEIR FACILE WAY, HAVE CHRISTENED ME FLAY-BY-NIGHT. SEVENTY-NINE.



SORRY?

"GIVE ME A NUMBER." THAT'S YOUR LINE, ISN'T IT? SEVENTY-NINE.



OH YEAH, RIGHT. SHE WAS, LIKE, SHE HAD THESE BEAUTIFUL EYES, LIKE PATCHES OF SKY EARLY IN THE MORNING, AND SHE SCREAMED LIKE AN ANGEL.



SAY, YOU EVER READ A MAGAZINE CALLED CHASTE? IT'S REALLY TERRIFIC.

I'VE HEARD OF IT.



THE DOCTOR HAS TREATED PRESIDENTS. HE'S PIONEERED RADICAL NEW OPERATIONS-- SOME WITH STARTLING SUCCESS. HE'S SAVED MANY LIVES.

HE HAS OVER A HUNDRED.

HE MAKES THEM HIMSELF.

HE COLLECTS LEATHER NECKTIES. THEY WROTE ABOUT IT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES.

HE WEARS A NEW ONE AT EVERY MEDIA EVENT HE ATTENDS.



CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTOGRAPH?

NO. OF COURSE NOT. DON'T BE FOOLISH. I THINK I SHALL ATTEND A PANEL DISCUSSION.



THE PANEL'S CALLED MAKE IT PAY. LOOKS INTERESTING.

THANK YOU, DOG SOUP.



DOG SOUP IS A WOMAN?

JESUS.



...EVEN 10 G'S PER VICTIM IDENTIFIED ISN'T TOO MUCH TO ASK.

THE THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT THEY'LL PAY TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN. EVEN IF THE COPS DON'T GO WITH IT, THE FAMILIES WILL. LIKE THE DUDE IN CANADA ...

THE CHOIRBOY

HELLO



SURELY, WHAT THE CHOIRBOY IS DESCRIBING IS A WORST-CASE SCENARIO, ONCE THEY'VE CAUGHT YOU ALIVE --AND YOU DON'T GET THE MONEY, REMEMBER THAT.

BUT, CARRION, WE DON'T DO IT FOR THE MONEY!

LITTLE GIRL

CARRION

LOOK, GIL,
WHAT IF SOMEONE
PHONES WHILE
WE'RE OUT? WHAT
IF THERE'S
NEWS?



IF THERE IS NEWS
IT WILL WAIT, MISS WALKER.
YOU NEED FRESH AIR.

WE BOTH DO.
A WALK WILL DO
US GOOD.



OF COURSE, I NEVER
MET THE BOGEYMAN. BUT I'M
PERFECTLY CERTAIN THE YOUNG
MAN CLAIMING HIS IDENTITY
IS NOT HE.



THE BOGEYMAN IS
DEAD, DOCTOR. HE DROWNED
IN LOUISIANA, THREE
YEARS AGO.



HOW
DO YOU
KNOW?

I KNOW.



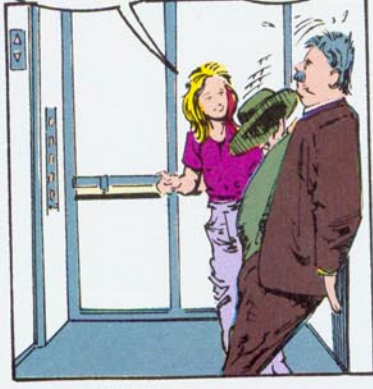
WE NEED TO
DEAL WITH THIS.
IMMEDIATELY.

I SUGGEST
YOU TALK TO NIMROD
ABOUT IT.



HEY. SOME
OF THESE CEREAL
NUTS ARE KIND
OF CUTE.

GILBERT?
ARE YOU
OKAY?





I AM A MERCIFUL GOD AND A JUST GOD. FOR I RELEASE MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM THE SUFFERING AND TORMENT OF THEIR LIVES, AND I GIVE THEM A NEW LIFE IN MY HEAVEN...

AS A BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN I WANT TO DISASSOCIATE MYSELF FROM THIS MADMAN.

I DO THE BIDDING OF THE LORD. I WASH THEIR ROBES AND MAKE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

WITH MY HAMMER. WITH MY LOVE.

BOGEYMAN CAN WE TALK? IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM?

UHN, WELL, I'M WATCHING THE RELIGION PANEL, MAN. BUT... UH, SURE.

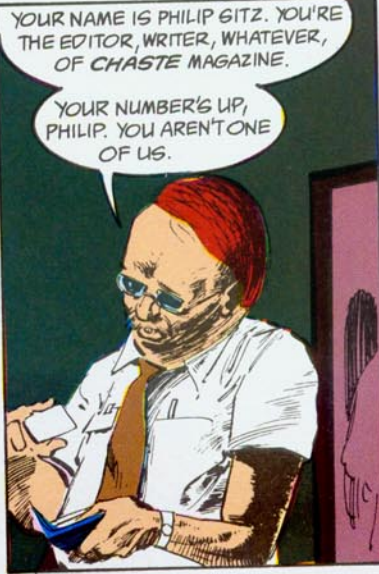
GOD. GOD TELLS ME TO DO IT.

OW!

LISTEN, YOU GUYS -- OH GOD -- LISTEN, WHAT IS THIS? I'M THE BOGEYMAN.

REALLY I AM.

GIVE ME A NUMBER. ANY NUMBER.



YOUR NAME IS PHILIP GITZ. YOU'RE THE EDITOR, WRITER, WHATEVER, OF CHASTE MAGAZINE.

YOUR NUMBER'S UP, PHILIP. YOU AREN'T ONE OF US.



NO--NO, I AM. I UNDERSTAND IT. FEMALES ARE INSECTS CREATED FOR MALE PLEASURE. STRENGTH. ENERGY. LUST.

THE WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE ANOTHER'S LIFE FOR ONE'S OWN GRATIFICATION...



I UNDERSTAND IT. THAT'S WHY I HAD TO GET HERE. TO SEE YOU ALL. TO LEARN.



BIG MISTAKE, PHILIP.

BIG MISTAKE.



"WE DON'T SHIT WHERE WE EAT," MR. NIMROD?

EXCEPT WHEN WE HAVE TO, DOCTOR. NEEDS MUST, WHEN THE DEVIL DRIVES.



DO YOU ALWAYS DRIVE LIKE THAT?

SURE.

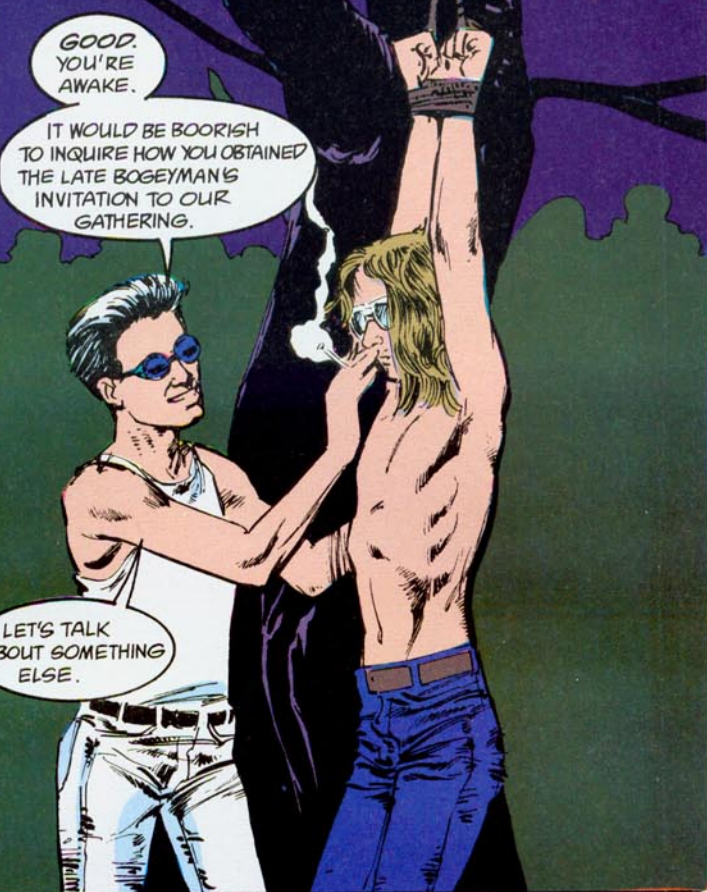
I WAS NERVOUS, WITH HIM ON MY LAP. WE SHOULD HAVE PUT HIM IN THE TRUNK.

I HAVE SOMETHING IN THE TRUNK ALREADY.



YOU CERTAINLY KNOW THIS AREA WELL, CORINTHIAN.

I MADE A PREVIOUS VISIT A DECADE BACK. THERE ARE SOME HERE-ABOUTS WHO STILL HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT...



GOOD. YOU'RE AWAKE.

IT WOULD BE BOORISH TO INQUIRE HOW YOU OBTAINED THE LATE BOGEYMAN'S INVITATION TO OUR GATHERING.

LET'S TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.



YOU SAY YOU CAME TO US TO LEARN. VERY WELL. WE'LL TEACH YOU. TEACH YOU THAT IT ISN'T THE SEX; ISN'T THE POWER; ISN'T THE CRUELTY.

WE ARE SOLDIERS OF DARKNESS, PHILIP. GLADIATORS, WARRIORS AND GODS.

AND WE'LL TEACH YOU.

THE GOOD DOCTOR LIKES TO SKIN PEOPLE ALIVE.

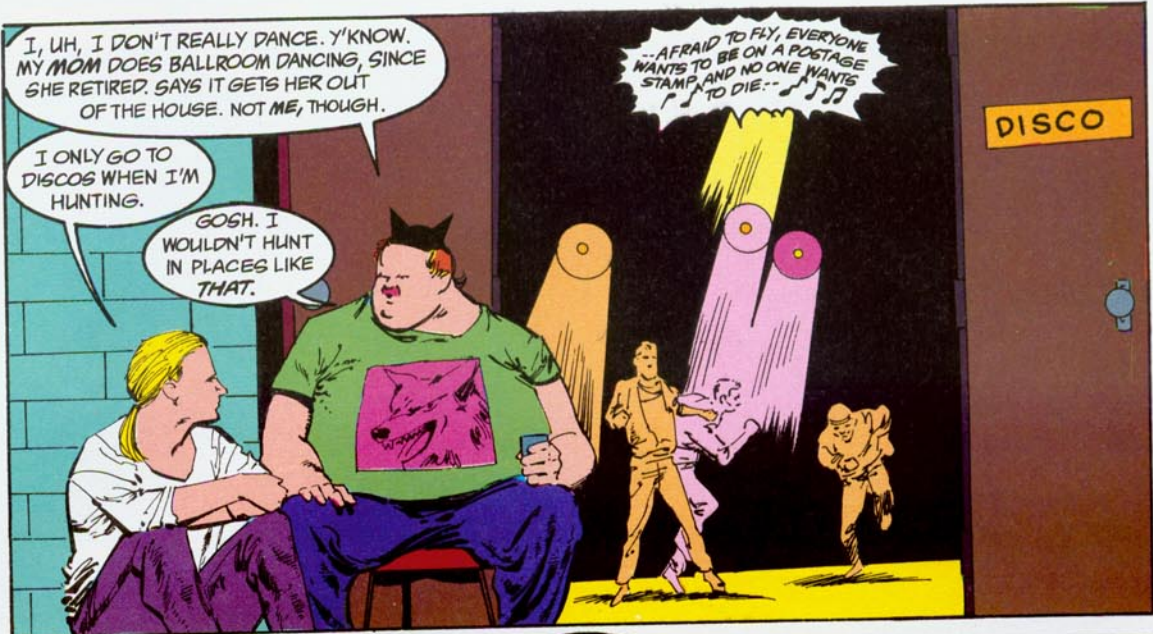
NIMROD IS A HUNTER. HE CAN BONE, JOINT AND GUT ANY ANIMAL IN MINUTES.



FOR MYSELF, I HAVE A PENCHANT FOR EYES.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO NOW, PHILIP ?

WE'RE GOING TO TAKE TURNS.



I, UH, I DON'T REALLY DANCE. Y'KNOW. MY MOM DOES BALLROOM DANCING, SINCE SHE RETIRED, SAYS IT GETS HER OUT OF THE HOUSE. NOT ME, THOUGH.

...AFRAID TO FLY, EVERYONE WANTS TO BE ON A POSTAGE STAMP, AND NO ONE WANTS TO DIE...

DISCO

I ONLY GO TO DISCOS WHEN I'M HUNTING.

GOSH. I WOULDN'T HUNT IN PLACES LIKE THAT.

I, UH, HAVE THIS PLACE. >MURP.< PARDON ME. I CAN'T TELL ANYONE ELSE WHERE IT IS, BECAUSE, WELL, YOU'D ALL WANT TO GO THERE.



'S A GREAT PLACE.

LIKE, THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE. AND THERE ARE ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL LITTLE CHILDREN, WANDERING OFF ON THEIR OWN, GETTING LOST. ALWAYS SO PLEASED TO SEE SOMEBODY FRIENDLY.



AND QUIET PLACES TO TAKE THEM TO, EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROWDS, WHERE NO ONE WILL DISTURB YOU BEFORE YOU'VE FINISHED.

AND WHAT'S GREAT IS, THE PEOPLE WHO RUN THE PLACE ALWAYS HUSH IT UP. THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW THAT I'M THERE EITHER. THEY DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO STOP GOING.



THEY WANT EVERYBODY TO BE HAPPY. JUST LIKE ME.

IT'S A WONDERFUL PLACE, MY SECRET, SPECIAL PLACE.

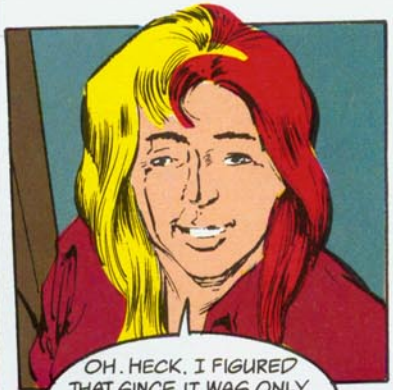
DISCO

AND THE OTHER THING I LOVE, IF YOU CAN'T FIND ANY BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN TO PLAY WITH, YOU CAN ALWAYS GO ON ONE OF THE RIDES.



--SHE'S GOT BOOTS OF SHINY, SHINY LEATHER, SHINY LEATHER IN THE DARK--

I'M SORRY, MA'AM. THIS IS A CONVENTION FUNCTION. YOU CAN'T GO IN.



OH. HECK. I FIGURED THAT SINCE IT WAS ONLY THE DISCO, NOBODY WOULD MIND IF I CAME IN AND DANCED FOR A TIME.

I COULDN'T SLEEP.



--A THOUSAND DREAMS THAT WOULD AWAIT ME, DIFFERENT COLORS MADE OF TEARS--

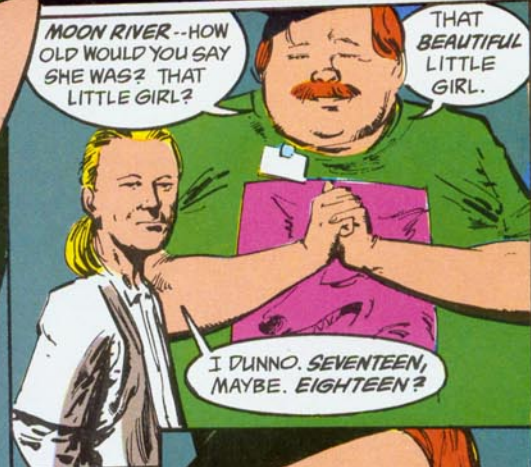
WA-WELL, I'M SORRY, MISS. SORRY, BUT IT'S ONLY FU-FOR PEOPLE AT THE CONVENTION, MUH-MISS.

I'M RUH-REAL SORRY.



IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. WELL, THANKS ANYWAY.

SEE YOU AROUND.



MOON RIVER --HOW OLD WOULD YOU SAY SHE WAS? THAT LITTLE GIRL?

THAT BEAUTIFUL LITTLE GIRL.

I DUNNO. SEVENTEEN, MAYBE. EIGHTEEN?



REALLY? I THINK SHE LOOKS YOUNGER.

MUCH YOUNGER.



YOU CATCH ANY OF THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS?

ONLY THE RELIGION PANEL.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN IT.



YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN RELIGION?

I DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD, THE DEVIL OR MAN. I HATE THE WHOLE DAMNED HUMAN RACE, INCLUDING MYSELF.



SCORE?

I GOT A HUNDRED AND SEVENTY ONE. DROWNED MOST OF THEM.

YOU?



EIGHT.



THAT'S CHICKEN-SHIT, MAN! EIGHT?

EIGHT?



EIGHT. AS YOU SAID, YOU'LL TAKE ANYTHING. ANYONE. THE WHOLE DAMNED HUMAN RACE. ME? I SPECIALIZE.

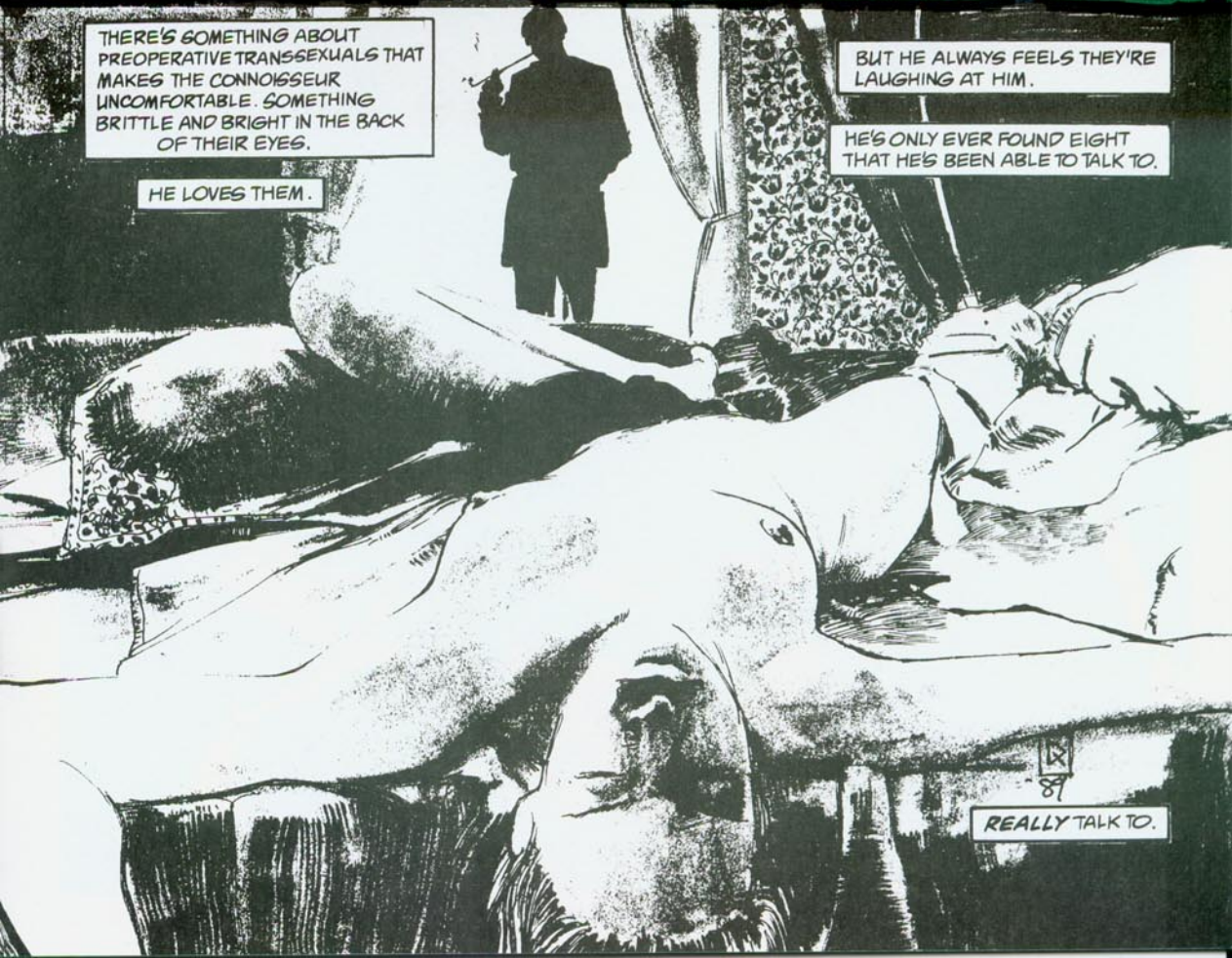
I'M THE CONNOISSEUR.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT PREOPERATIVE TRANSSEXUALS THAT MAKES THE CONNOISSEUR UNCOMFORTABLE. SOMETHING BRITTLE AND BRIGHT IN THE BACK OF THEIR EYES.

HE LOVES THEM.

BUT HE ALWAYS FEELS THEY'RE LAUGHING AT HIM.

HE'S ONLY EVER FOUND EIGHT THAT HE'S BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO.



REALLY TALK TO.



...SO WHAT DO YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT?

BUSINESS. THE WEATHER. NOTHING IMPORTANT. JUST THINGS. STUFF.



UH... RIGHT.



HEY, GOOD LOOKIN'. COME AND BOOGIE! I LOVE THIS SONG.

WILD THING! YOU MAKE MY HEART SING! YOU MAKE EVERYTHING GROOVY...



THAT WAS ENJOYABLE. DOING IT TOGETHER LIKE THAT.

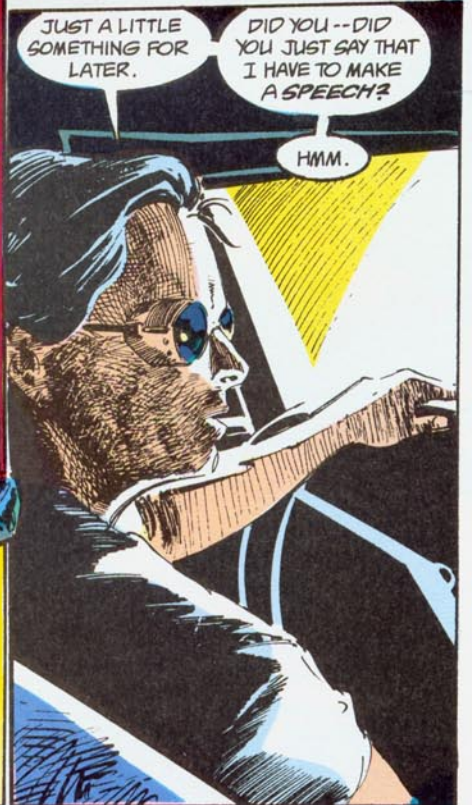
PITY IT HAD TO END SO SOON, REALLY.

IT'LL BE GOOD TO GET BACK. I HAVE TO GET SOME SLEEP BEFORE TOMORROW MORNING.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH, CORINTHIAN.



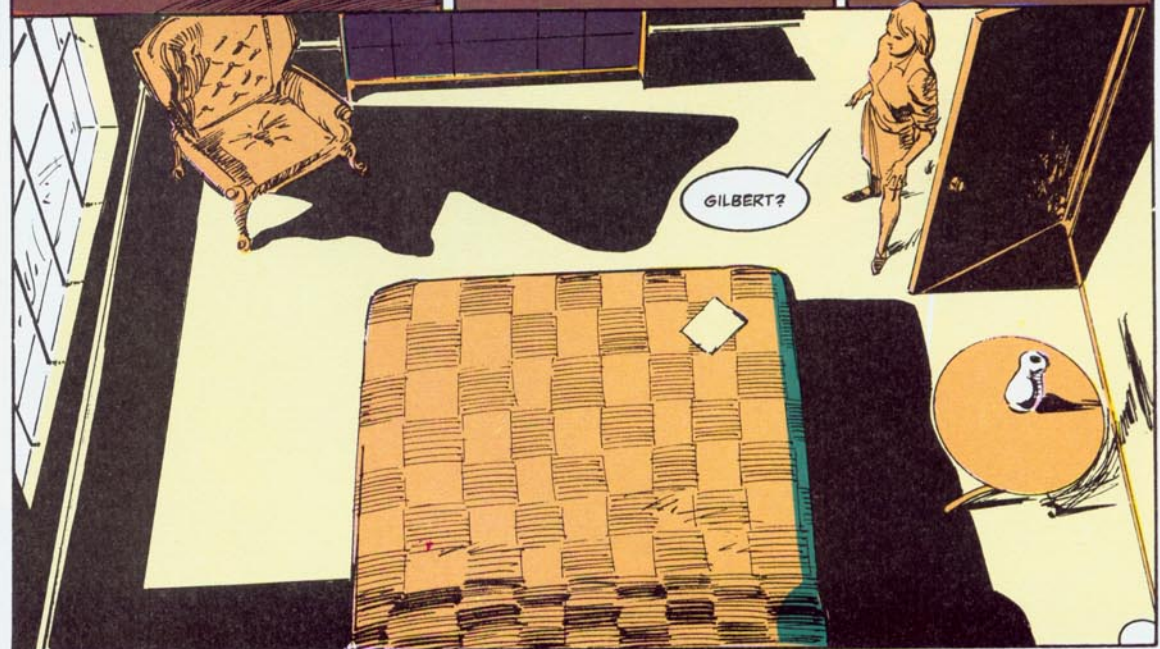
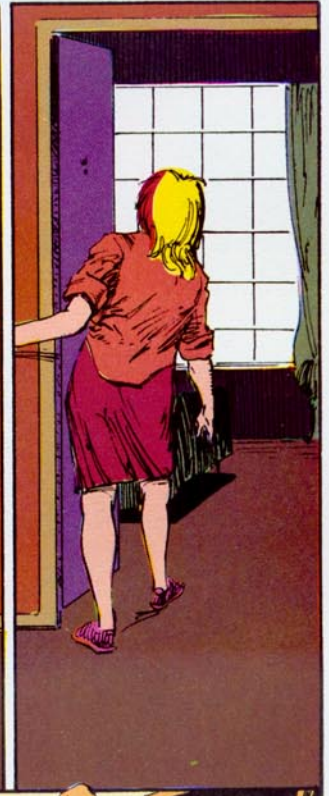
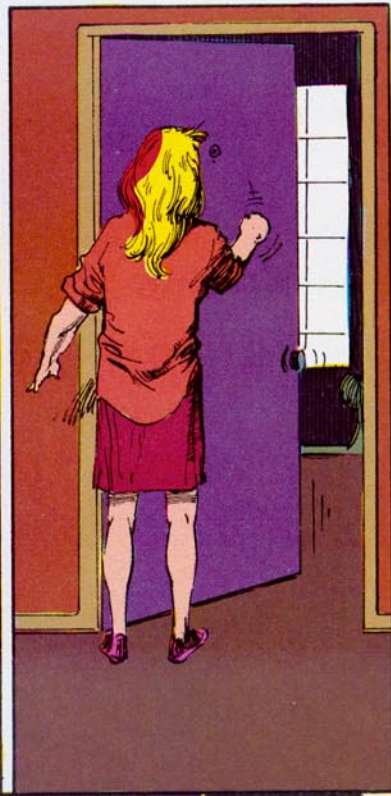
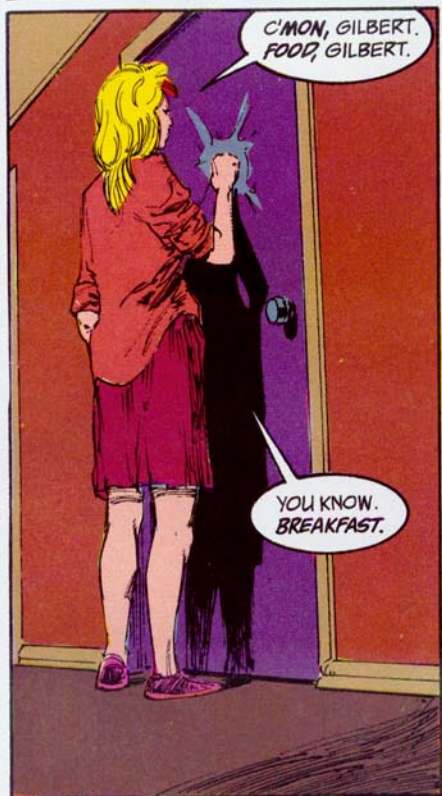
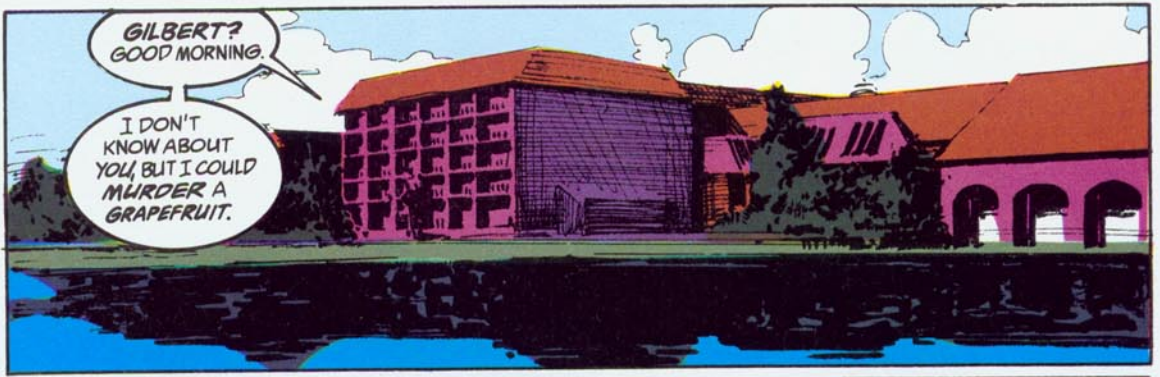
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN THE TRUNK THAT'S SO IMPORTANT, THEN?



JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR LATER.

DID YOU -- DID YOU JUST SAY THAT I HAVE TO MAKE A SPEECH?

HMM.



10:30 AM. PANEL DISCUSSION. "WE ARE WHAT WE ARE."

THEY SAY THE FUNDAMENTAL ACT OF HUMANITY IS NOT TO KILL.

BULL. THE FUNDAMENTAL ACT OF HUMANITY IS TO KILL. **THEY** ARE SHEEP AND CATTLE. BUT **WE** KNOW THE TRUTH. **WE'RE ALIVE.**



12:30 PM. PANEL DISCUSSION. "WOMEN IN SERIAL KILLING."

I TELL YOU, I'M **SICK AND TIRED** OF WOMEN IN OUR LINE BEING **STEREOTYPED** AS **BLACK WIDOWS** OR **KILLER NURSES**.

I'M A **SERIAL KILLER**, AND A **WOMAN**, AND I'M **PROUD** OF IT.



THE GRASS WIDOW

DOG SOUP

DARK ANGEL

3:30 PM. PANEL DISCUSSION. "THERE IS NO SANITY CLAUSE."

UHN, LOOK, AS A PRACTICING PSYCHIATRIST, I, UH, WELL, LOOK, NONE OF YOU, UH, WELL, THERE'S NO MORE EVIDENCE OF MENTAL ABNORMALITY AMONGST US PEOPLE THAN AMONGST, UH, **THEM**.

LESS, MAYBE.



EL DORADO

PSYCHO-KILLER

CANDY MAN

4:30 PM.

FUN LAND, GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH IN TEN MINUTES.



YES, SIR.

SO WHAT WERE YOU SAYING? HOW YOU GOT STARTED?

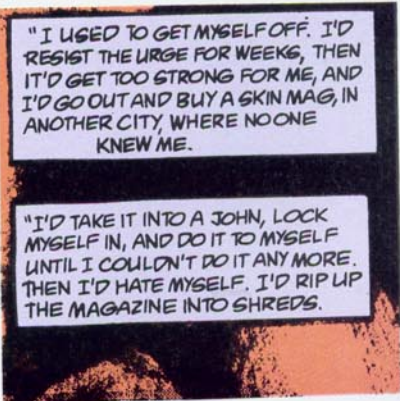
PUSSIES.

PUSSIES?



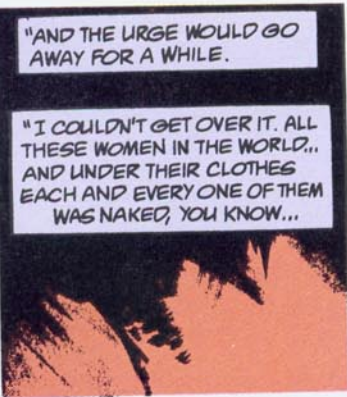
WHEN I WAS A KID. CUTTING THEIR HEADS OFF WITH MY POCKET KNIFE.

THEN, WHEN I GOT OLDER, PUSSIES DIDN'T DO IT FOR ME ANY MORE.



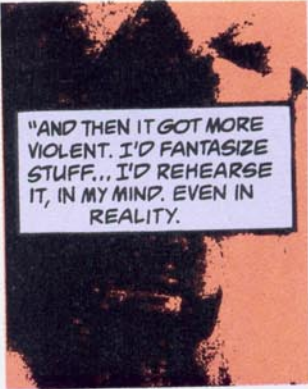
"I USED TO GET MYSELF OFF. I'D RESIST THE URGE FOR WEEKS, THEN IT'D GET TOO STRONG FOR ME, AND I'D GO OUT AND BUY A SKIN MAG, IN ANOTHER CITY, WHERE NO ONE KNEW ME.

"I'D TAKE IT INTO A JOHN, LOCK MYSELF IN, AND DO IT TO MYSELF UNTIL I COULDN'T DO IT ANY MORE. THEN I'D HATE MYSELF. I'D RIP UP THE MAGAZINE INTO SHREDS.

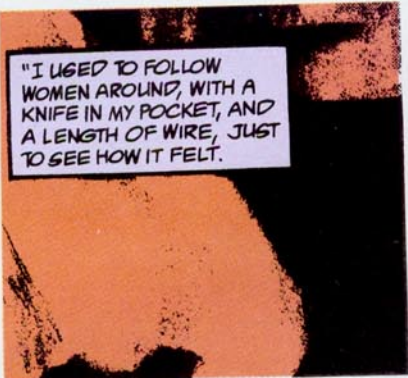


"AND THE URGE WOULD GO AWAY FOR A WHILE.


"I COULDN'T GET OVER IT. ALL THESE WOMEN IN THE WORLD.. AND UNDER THEIR CLOTHES EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS NAKED, YOU KNOW...




"AND THEN IT GOT MORE VIOLENT. I'D FANTASIZE STUFF... I'D REHEARSE IT, IN MY MIND. EVEN IN REALITY.




"I USED TO FOLLOW WOMEN AROUND, WITH A KNIFE IN MY POCKET, AND A LENGTH OF WIRE, JUST TO SEE HOW IT FELT.



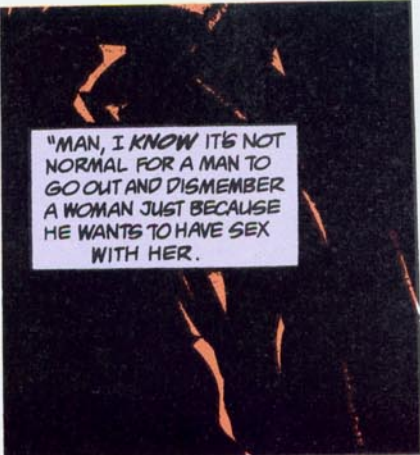
"THEN I DID IT.



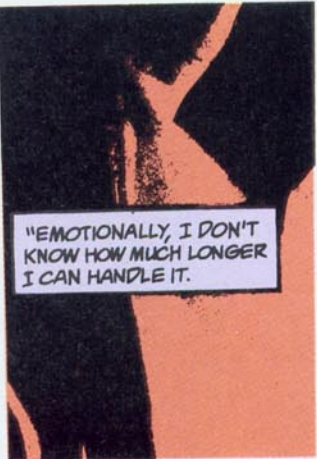
"THE REAL THING.




"THE URGE BUILT UP, AND I COULDN'T HANDLE IT ANY OTHER WAY.



"MAN, I KNOW IT'S NOT NORMAL FOR A MAN TO GO OUT AND DISMEMBER A WOMAN JUST BECAUSE HE WANTS TO HAVE SEX WITH HER.



"EMOTIONALLY, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HANDLE IT.



"BUT THE URGE BUILDS UP IN ME, AND I DO IT TO THEM. AND WHEN I'M FINISHED, AND THE URGE IS SATISFIED, I RIP THEM TO SHREDS.

"LIKE I DID WITH THE SKIN MAGAZINES.

"LIKE I DID WITH THE PUSSIES."



I DUNNO. I THOUGHT MAYBE IF I CAME HERE, I'D MEET OTHER PEOPLE WITH THE SAME PROBLEM. PEOPLE I COULD TALK TO, WHO'D UNDERSTAND.

WHO'D HELP ME.

BUT NO ONE ELSE HAS REALLY BEEN INTERESTED.



I, UH, SOMETHINGS COME UP. SOMETHING I HAVE TO DO. I, UH, I, UH, I, UH, I'LL SEE Y'AROUND THEN, UH...

YEAH. FINE.

NO PROBLEM.



BOY, ROSIE, YOU'RE A REAL SCREAMING *SUCCESS* ON THIS ONE. NOT ONLY DID YOU *NOT* FIND JED, BUT YOU LOST GILBERT EN ROUTE.

PAT YOURSELF ON THE BACK.

THREE CHEERS FOR ROSE.



AND WHAT ON EARTH WAS THIS ABOUT? "IF THINGS GET BAD, CALL THE NAME..."

GILBERT, WHAT IS THIS? WHERE ARE YOU?



KNOCK KNOCK

HELLO?

ROOM SERVICE. GOT A MESSAGE FOR YOU, MA'AM. FROM YOUR GRANDMOTHER.

FROM UNITY?



IT'S NOT REALLY ROOM SERVICE. IT'S ME.

WE'RE GOING TO PLAY, LITTLE GIRL. WE CAN MAKE BELIEVE IT'S MY SPECIAL PLACE.



IT'S A SMALL WORLD AFTER ALL...

I LOVE THAT SONG. IT'S SO TRUE. SO TRUE.



NOW, WHEN WE'VE FINISHED YOU MUSTN'T TELL ANYBODY THAT I PLAYED WITH YOU.

ESPECIALLY NOT MISTER NIMROD.



HE SAID THAT DIRTY STUFF AT THE BEGINNING ABOUT WHAT WE DON'T DO WHERE WE EAT.

WASH HIS MOUTH OUT WITH SOAP, MOMMA.

I LOVE YOU, LITTLE GIRL.



I LOVE YOU TO DEATH.



YOU-- YOU CAN TAKE OFF YOUR DRESS, YOU KNOW.

YOU WON'T NEED IT ANY MORE.



M-MORPHEUS...?



I HOPE YOU DIDN'T SAY SOMETHING DIRTY.

I DON'T LIKE DIRTY LITTLE GIRLS. I CALL THEM LITTLE SLUTS.



Let go of her, Nathan Diskin.

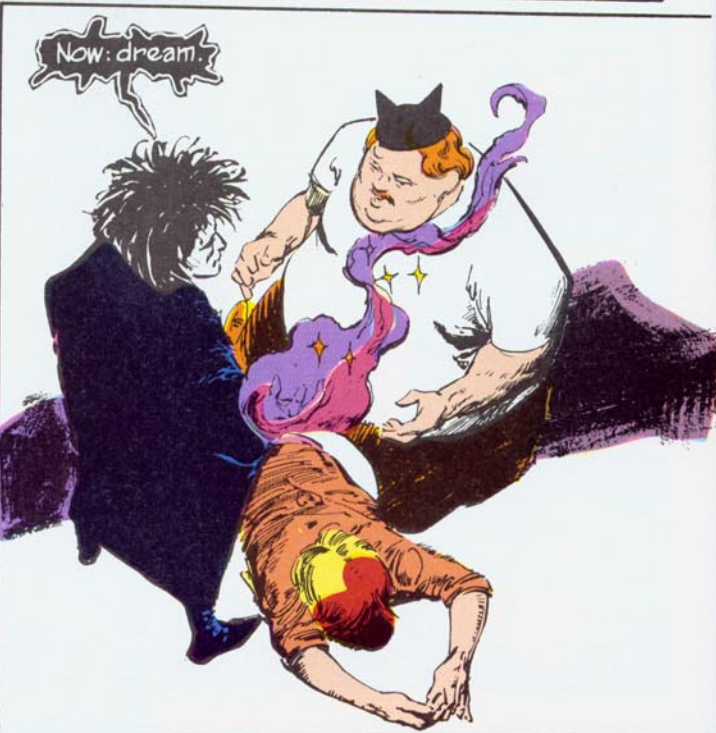


She isn't yours, Nathan. She belongs to no one, except perhaps to herself.



Let go of her now.

YOU CAN'T HAVE HER. SHE'S MY FRIEND. WE WERE PLAYING. SHE'S MINE.



Now: dream.



And as for you, Rose Walker, heal. Heal and breathe. Then leave this building.

I have other business here, and I would not see you further troubled...



KKH. HHH. KKH.



And all his little friends come running. Hello, they say to the funny giant, will you be our friend? Will you play with us? We promise never to make fun of you.



Of course I'll be your friend, he tells them.

I'm sorry, he tells the children. I'm sorry I hurt you all. Do you forgive me?

Of course we forgive you, they say. Now, let us play some more in these gardens, which are paradise.

It is the most wonderful dream he has ever had.

ROSE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING. DOESN'T CARE.

ONE THING PENETRATED. ONE THING SHE KNOWS.

SHE'S GETTING OUT.



YOU KNOW, I DON'T USUALLY SPEAK IN PUBLIC. BUT THE OPPORTUNITY OF TALKING TO ALL OF YOU IS JUST TOO GOOD TO PASS UP.



BECAUSE YOU ARE SPECIAL PEOPLE. **VERY** SPECIAL PEOPLE.

WE ARE THE AMERICAN DREAMERS, DRIVING DOWN THE HOLY ROAD TO TRUE KNOWLEDGE THAT'S PAVED WITH BLOOD AND GOLD.



AND ACROSS THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF THIS FAIR COUNTRY, WE ARE KILLING PEOPLE.



WE DON'T DO IT TO MAKE A LIVING. WE DON'T DO IT FOR REVENGE.

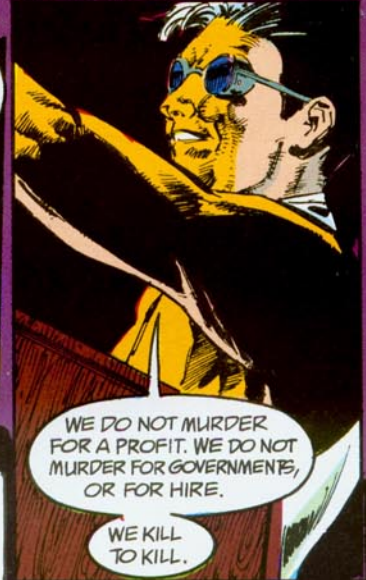


WE DON'T KILL PEOPLE ANONYMOUSLY--POISONING THEIR ASPIRIN, PUTTING SHARDS OF GLASS IN BABY FOOD.



WE DON'T DRIVE CARS ONTO CROWDED SIDEWALKS.

WE DON'T CARRY GUNS INTO BURGER JOINTS AND BLASTAWAY UNTIL A SWAT TEAM SPATTERS OUR BRAIN ALL OVER THE FRENCH FRIES.



WE DO NOT MURDER FOR A PROFIT. WE DO NOT MURDER FOR GOVERNMENTS, OR FOR HIRE.

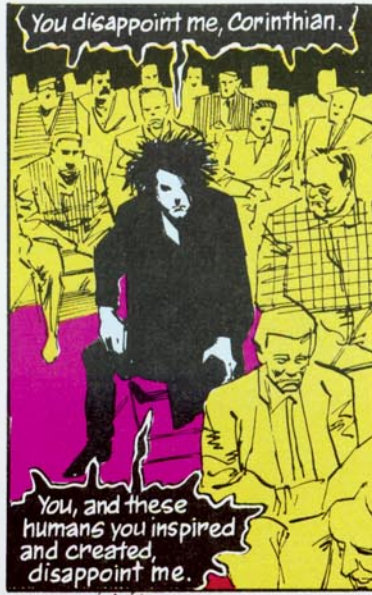
WE KILL TO KILL.




WE ARE ENTREPRENEURS IN AN EXPANDING FIELD.



UH...






SO WHAT NOW? DO YOU EXPECT ME

TO SUBMIT QUIETLY?
TO RETURN TO THE DREAMING
TO SCAR THEIR SLEEPING
MINDS?

NEVER AGAIN TO KNOW
THE DELIGHTS OF A SWEET
BOY'S EYE AS IT POPS
BETWEEN MY TEETH?

IS
THAT
IT?




No. That's
not it.




THEN LET US
FIGHT, DREAM
LORD. PUT ON
YOUR HELM.

No, Corinthian. We shall
not fight. And you shall
not go back to the
Dreaming.

LET ME SHOW
YOU THE ARTS OF
PAIN AND WAR I
HAVE LEARNED
ON THIS EARTH...



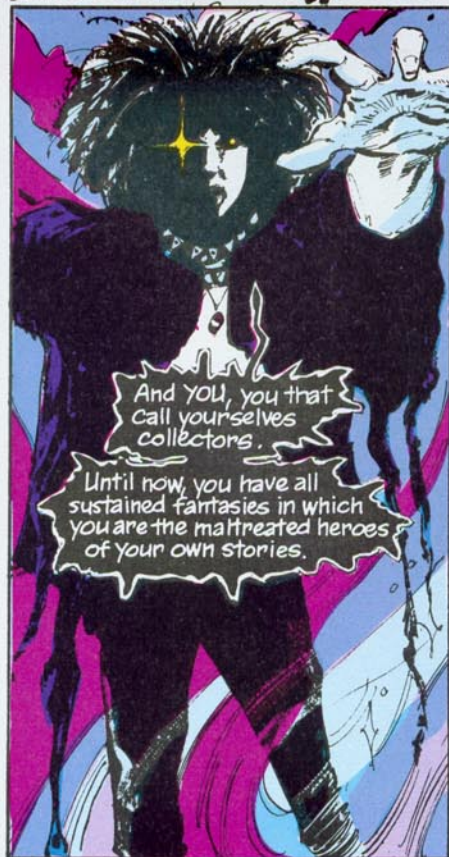
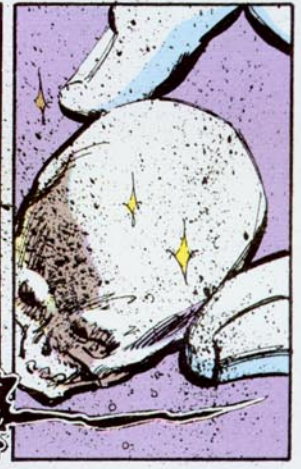
It is my fault,
I am afraid. I created
you poorly, then.



As I do
uncreate
you now.



NO...





For this is my judgment on you: that you shall know, at all times, and forever, exactly what you are. And you shall know just how LITTLE that means.

Now LEAVE.



YOU?

COLLECT YOURSELF, MISS WALKER. IT IS ONLY ME...



I THINK THIS IS YOUR BROTHER.

I FOUND HIM. HE WAS LOCKED IN THE BOOT OF A CAR. I HEARD HIM SOBBING.

IS HE DEAD?

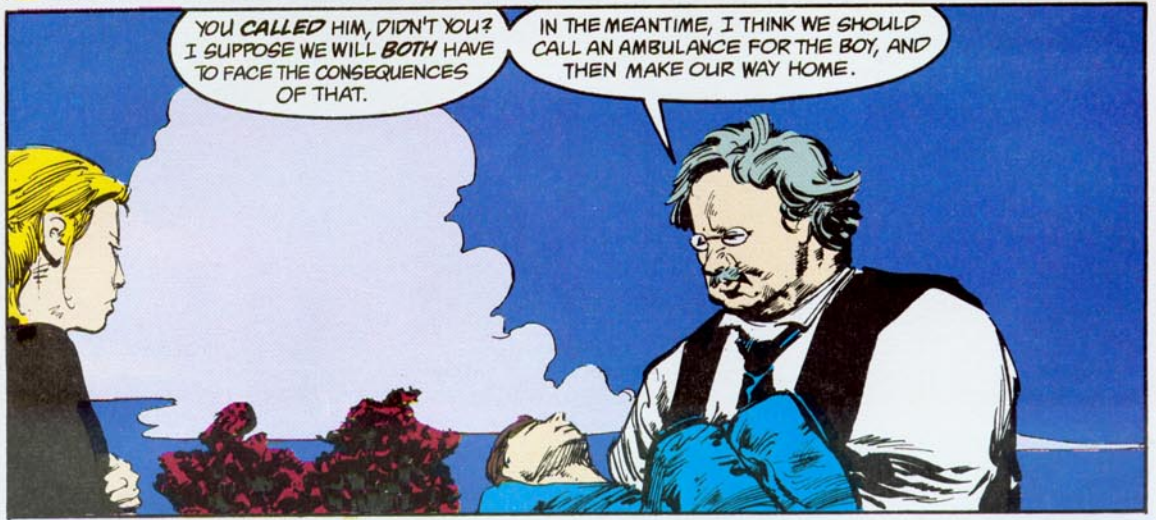


NO. HE'S UNCONSCIOUS, BUT STILL ALIVE. WE URGENTLY NEED TO GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.



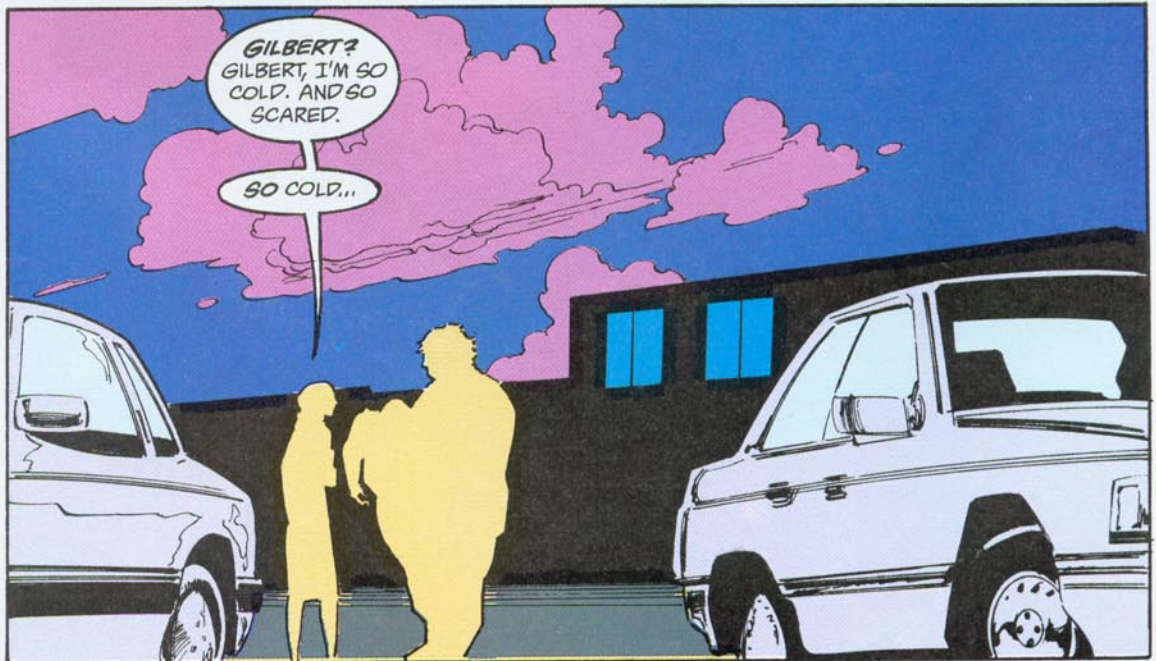
I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED HERE TODAY, GILBERT.

I DON'T THINK I WANT TO. NOT YET.



YOU CALLED HIM, DIDN'T YOU? I SUPPOSE WE WILL BOTH HAVE TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT.

IN THE MEANTIME, I THINK WE SHOULD CALL AN AMBULANCE FOR THE BOY, AND THEN MAKE OUR WAY HOME.



GILBERT?
GILBERT, I'M SO COLD. AND SO SCARED.

SO COLD...

THE FIRST WIND OF WINTER BLEW FROM THE NORTH, AND IT HAD ICE AND RIME ON ITS BREATH.

IT WAS DIRTY AND SHARP AND IT CUT LIKE A RAZOR, AND IF IT TOUCHED YOU, YOU COULD WASH AND WASH UNTIL YOUR SKIN WAS TATTERED AND BLOODED, BUT YOU'D NEVER BE CLEAN AGAIN.

WELCOME
CEREAL
CONVENTION



IT SCATTERED THEM INTO THE NIGHT, THE QUIET ONES WITH DEATH IN THEIR EYES.

BUT THEY LEFT MORE TENTATIVELY THAN THEY HAD COME, AS IF THEY HAD SEEN SOMETHING UNHOLY INSIDE THEMSELVES; SOMETHING THEY WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO FORGET.

AND THEY LEFT, SLOWLY, ONE BY ONE, WITH RELUCTANCE, LEAVING THE SAFETY OF THE LIGHT FOR THE CHILL CERTAINTIES OF THE DARKNESS.



IT SEEMED LIKE THE NIGHT SUCKED THEM UP, TOOK THEM INTO ITS DARK HEART.

IT SEEMED LIKE THE DARKNESS SWALLOWED THEM...

PERHAPS IT DID.

